

FAMOUS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

MICHAEL J. FOX

MICHAEL J. FOX IS AN ACTOR BEST KNOWN FOR HIS ROLES IN BACK TO THE FUTURE MOVIES AND IN THE TELEVISIONS SHOWS FAMILY TIES AND SPIN CITY. IN 1991 MICHAEL J. FOX WAS DIAGNOSED WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE.

FOX RETIRED FROM FULL-TIME ACTING IN 2000, BUT STILL MAKES AN OCCASIONAL APPEARANCE ON SCREEN OR TELEVISION. HE IS MARRIED WITH FOUR CHILDREN AND AN ADVOCATE OF STEM CELL RESEARCH



STEPHEN HAWKING

STEPHEN HAWKING KNEW WHAT HE WANTED TO DO BY THE TIME HE WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD. HE DID NOT WANT TO STUDY MEDICINE, A CAREER HIS PARENTS HOPED HE WOULD FOLLOW. INSTEAD, HAWKING DECIDED TO BE A SCIENTIST AND CHOSE PHYSICS. STEPHEN WAS INTERESTED IN STUDYING THE UNIVERSE. HE ATTENDED OXFORD UNIVERSITY IN ENGLAND, AS AN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT. HE RECEIVED HIS PH.D IN 1966 FROM CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY. BY THE TIME HE WAS 35 YEARS OLD, HAWKING WAS CAMBRIDGE'S FIRST GRAVITATIONAL PHYSICS PROFESSOR AND RECEIVED THE LUCASIAN PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS AWARD.

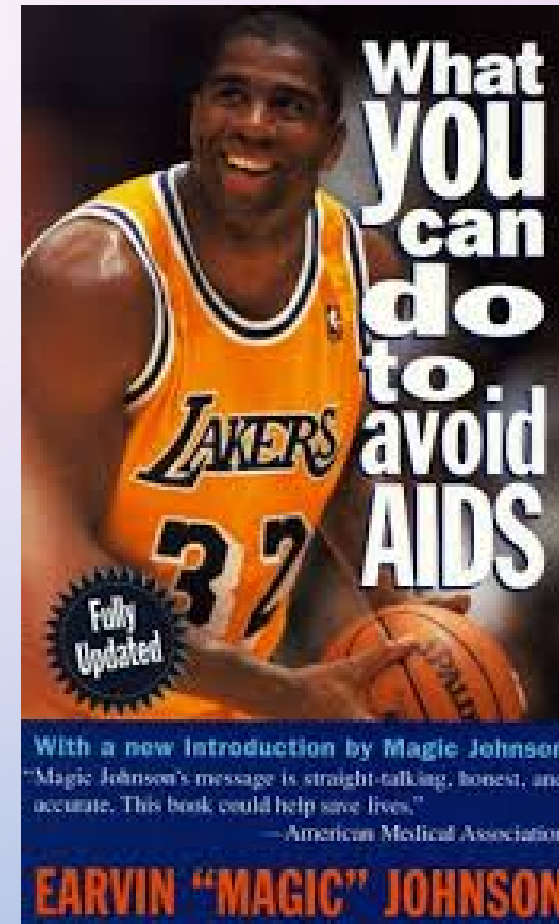
WHEN STEPHEN HAWKING WAS 21-YEARS-OLD, HE WAS DIAGNOSED WITH AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS (ALS), ALSO KNOWN AS LOU GEHRIG'S DISEASE. THIS DISEASE ATTACKS THE NERVES THAT CONTROL A BODY'S VOLUNTARY MOVEMENTS. IT AFFECTS WALKING, SPEAKING, BREATHING, SWALLOWING, ETC. AT THE TIME OF HIS DIAGNOSIS, THE DOCTORS GAVE HAWKING TWO YEARS TO LIVE. HAWKING HAS DEFIED THIS TIME FRAME AND IS STILL WORKING. TODAY, STEPHEN CANNOT MOVE MUCH AT ALL, HAS TROUBLE HOLDING HIS HEAD UP, AND CANNOT SPEAK, THOUGH HE DOESN'T LET IT STOP HIM. HE NOW USES A SPECIAL COMPUTER THAT DISPLAYS THE TEXT HE TYPES AND SPEAKS WHAT HE TYPES WITH AN ELECTRONIC VOICE



MAGIC JOHNSON

MAGIC JOHNSON, AT 6-FOOT 9, WAS THE TALLEST POINT GUARD IN THE NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION (NBA). HIS TALENTS ELICITED WONDER AND ADMIRATION FROM EVEN THE MOST CASUAL BASKETBALL FAN. HE ACCOMPLISHED EVERYTHING A PLAYER COULD DREAM OF DURING HIS 12 YEAR NBA CAREER.

ON NOVEMBER 7, 1991, JOHNSON RETIRED FROM PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL BECAUSE A BLOOD TEST HAD SHOWN THAT HE WAS INFECTED WITH HIV. HE THEN DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO EDUCATING PEOPLE -- ESPECIALLY YOUNGSTERS -- ABOUT HIV AND AIDS PREVENTION. HE ESTABLISHED THE MAGIC JOHNSON FOUNDATION TO RAISE MONEY TO FUND HIV AND AIDS ORGANIZATIONS.



PATRICIA POLACCO

PATRICIA POLACCO IS A WRITER AND ILLUSTRATOR OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS WHO STARTED WRITING CHILDREN'S BOOKS WHEN SHE WAS 41 YEARS OLD! PATRICIA MAJORED IN FINE ART AND RECEIVED HER PH.D. IN ART HISTORY. THE UNIQUE THING ABOUT PATRICIA POLACCO IS THAT SHE HAS BEEN WRITING CHILDREN'S BOOKS EVEN AFTER SHE WAS DIAGNOSED AS HAVING DYSLEXIA, DYSNUMERIA AND DYSGRAPHIA AT THE AGE OF 14. PATRICIA DID NOT LEARN TO READ WELL UNTIL AFTER SHE WAS 14 YEARS OLD. A TEACHER WAS ABLE TO GET THE ADDITIONAL HELP MS. POLLACO NEEDED TO OVERCOME HER READING PROBLEMS! MS. POLLACO HAS WRITTEN A BOOK ABOUT HER EXPERIENCES AND THIS TEACHER WHO HELPED HER. THE BOOK IS TITLED THANK YOU, MR. FALKER.



CHRISTOPHER REEVE

CHRISTOPHER REEVE GREW UP IN PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY, WITH HIS MOTHER AND HIS STEPFATHER. IN 1977 REEVE WAS CHOSEN FROM 200 HOPEFULS TO STAR IN SUPERMAN FOR WHICH HE WON THE BRITISH ACADEMY AWARD AS BEST ACTOR.

DURING A CROSS-COUNTRY EVENT IN MAY 1995, HIS HORSE BALKED AT A RAIL JUMP, PITCHING REEVE FORWARD WHERE HE LANDED HEAD FIRST. HIS INJURIES LEFT THE ACTOR PARALYZED, UNABLE TO USE ANY OF HIS LIMBS OR EVEN TO BREATHE WITHOUT THE HELP OF A RESPIRATOR.



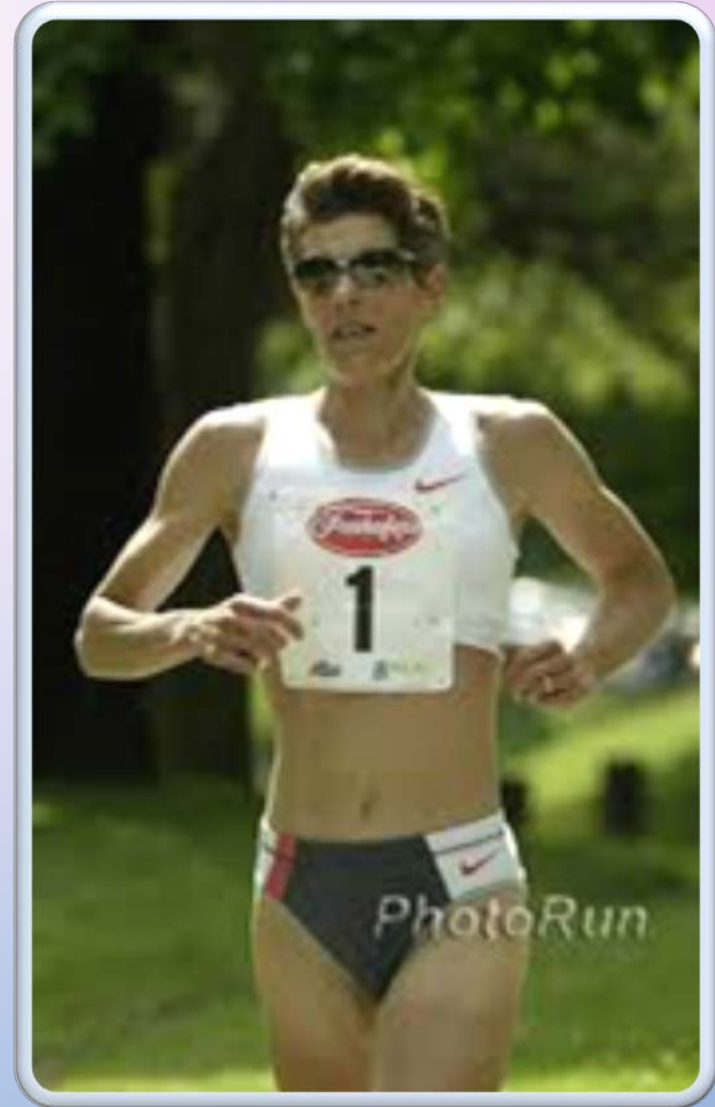
HEATHER WHITESTONE

HEATHER WHITESTONE NEVER HEARD THE WORDS ANNOUNCING HER WIN IN 1995 WHEN SHE WAS CROWNED MISS AMERICA. MISS WHITESTONE WAS THE FIRST PERSON WITH A DISABILITY EVER TO BE SELECTED AS MISS AMERICA. HEATHER HAD BEEN DEAF SINCE THE AGE OF 18 MONTHS. DOCTORS TOLD HEATHER'S PARENTS THAT SHE WOULD NEVER READ BEYOND THE THIRD GRADE LEVEL, NOR LEARN TO SPEAK. IN RESPONSE TO THE JUDGES' QUESTION ABOUT HER AIM IN LIFE, SHE REPLIED THAT SHE WOULD LIKE TO ASSIST CHILDREN FROM ALL BACKGROUNDS TO REACH THEIR FULLEST POTENTIAL IN LIFE, TO SET HIGH GOALS, AND ACHIEVE THEM, AS SHE HAD DONE.



MARLA RUNYAN

ONE OF THE WOMEN REPRESENTING THE UNITED STATES IN THE 1500 METER TRACK EVENT AT THE 2000 OLYMPICS WAS MARLA RUNYAN. IN 1996, MARLA SET SEVERAL TRACK AND FIELD RECORDS AT THE PARALYMPICS IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA. FOLLOWING THAT SUCCESS, MARLA WANTED TO COMPETE IN THE 2000 OLYMPICS IN SYDNEY -- EVEN THOUGH SHE IS LEGALLY BLIND. THE 31-YEAR-OLD RUNNER HAS BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH STARGARDT DISEASE. THIS IS A CONDITION THAT LEAVES HER WITH A LIMITED ABILITY TO SEE WHAT IS IN FRONT OF HER. IN SYDNEY, MARLA BECAME THE FIRST LEGALLY BLIND ATHLETE TO COMPETE IN AN OLYMPICS.



MARLEE MATLIN

MARLEE MATLIN IS A STAND-UP COMEDIAN AND AN ACTRESS. SOME OF HER FILMS INCLUDE DEAD SILENCE, IT'S MY PARTY, HEAR NO EVIL, BRIDGE TO SILENCE, WALKER, AND CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD. IN 1987, SHE CAPTIVATED THE WORLD BY WINNING THE ACADEMY AWARD FOR BEST ACTRESS IN THE FILM CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD. SHE ALSO COMPETED ON DANCING WITH THE STARS IN 2008.

MARLEE MATLIN BECAME DEAF IN INFANCY DUE TO ROSEOLA INFANTUM



NYLE DIMARCO

NYLE DIMARCO IS AN ACTOR, MODEL AND SPOKESMAN. HE IS A NATIVE NEW YORKER AND WAS BORN INTO A LARGE MULTIGENERATIONAL DEAF FAMILY. HE IS AN ALUMNUS OF GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY, THE ONLY LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY IN THE WORLD FOR THE DEAF. HE WAS THE STAND OUT STAR AND WINNER OF *AMERICA'S NEXT TOP MODEL'S* CYCLE 22! HE HAS GAINED A LOT OF ATTENTION FOR BEING THE FIRST DEAF CONTESTANT. NYLE WON THE DWTS COMPETITION IN MAY 2016.



CHRIS BURKE

CHRIS BURKE, BEST KNOWN FOR THE CHARACTER, CORKY, PLAYED FOR FOUR YEARS ON THE TELEVISION SERIES, LIFE GOES ON, AND BECAME ONE OF AMERICA'S FAVORITE PERSONALITIES. THROUGH HIS WORK, HE WAS ABLE TO TRANSFORM AMERICA'S IMAGE OF THE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. CHRIS BURKE WAS THE FIRST PERSON WITH DOWN SYNDROME TO STAR IN A WEEKLY TELEVISION SERIES. CURRENTLY, HE SERVES AS THE NATIONAL DOWN SYNDROME SOCIETY (NDSS) AMBASSADOR. CHRIS HAD THE FAITH IN HIS OWN ABILITIES AND THE COURAGE TO FACE PREJUDICE AS HE PURSUED HIS DREAM TO BECOME AN ACTOR.

TODAY CHRIS TRAVELS ALL AROUND THE COUNTRY DELIVERING INSPIRATIONAL SPEECHES TO VARIOUS GROUPS OF CHILDREN, STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND PROFESSIONALS.

